

## Testimony Opposing HB6

Chairman Tom Young and members of the 135th General Assembly,

My name is Bethany Hickman and I am asking you to oppose HB 6 because it will lead to so many harmful and dangerous outcomes.

HB 6 makes trans youth unable to compete and play in sports of the gender they identify with. Young people are already going through so much in middle/high school and sports are one of the few ways to manage the pains of adolescence. I found a lot of stress relief through running track & field throughout high school. I was a really shy kid, so running track was the way I met my social & emotional needs. I met my best friend through participating in sports and that friendship truly changed my life for the better. I wonder how many life-changing friendships first began through high school sports.

By not allowing trans youth to participate in sports as the gender they identify with, we will see a dramatic decline in the wellbeing of hundreds of children in Ohio. This would expose these children to the risk of further discrimination and harm from the hand of their peers. This sets a narrative that trans youth do not belong, which will cause a significant rise in attempted and completed suicides, as well as engagement in self-harm. This bill takes away the healthy outlets that so many would otherwise turn to. It has been proven that young people who engage in sports have reduced chances of developing serious mental health conditions, which trans youth are more likely to experience than their cis counterparts. It is not the role of the government to prevent children from participating in sports - no matter who they are. If this bill is passed, it will lead to a heartbreaking increase in youth suicides throughout Ohio.

Thank you for reading my testimony and putting in the time and energy to understand the devastating impact this bill will cause.

Sincerely,  
Bethany Hickman